



CITY OF TOPEKA

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE: POLICE & COMMUNITY

CITY COUNCIL
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Date: November 30, 2020

Time: 3:00pm

Location: Classroom A; Law Enforcement Center 320 S. Kansas Ave

Committee members present: Councilmembers Karen Hiller, Sylvia Ortiz (Chair), Michael Padilla

City staff present: City Manager Brent Trout, CPT Jamey Haltom (TPD), Lisa Robertson (City Attorney), Mark Jones (TPD Legal), Ed Collazo (Independent Police Auditor), Chief Bill Cochran (TPD), Deputy Chief Bryan Wheelles (TPD)

1) Call to Order

Chairwoman Ortiz called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. Committee members introduced themselves.

2) Approve minutes from November 9, 2020 meeting

Committee member Padilla made a motion to approve the minutes. Committee member Hiller seconded the motion. Motion approved 3:0.

3) Input from Presenters of Cultural Awareness Training Program [video 2:25 minutes]

Cain Davis, Strategic Leadership Academy, is the instructor for the Cultural Competency Training Program that the Topeka Police Department staff has been participating in during 2020. Mr. Davis provided a presentation to introduce the program and subject matter.

Questions following the presentation:

- Chairwoman Ortiz -
 - “Code of Honor” slide, why are some in red and some in black? Is it to place emphasis on those items? Mr. Davis confirmed, yes.
 - What is meant by “Take one jewel home?” Mr. Davis responded it is meant to ask the officers to take away one piece of information and really reflect on it. Hold each other accountable.
 - “Do not disturb others”, please explain. Mr. Davis responded it was for people to not disturb the class during session, leave it they receive a call.

- “Cultural Blindness” slide – are these actions you are asking the officers to take, or not to take? Mr. Davis responded these are things for officers to pay attention to.
- Appreciated the information on the “Whites least likely to perceive police tactics as too harsh” slide.
- What training are officers getting for individuals with mental illness or deaf/hard of hearing? Mr. Davis noted TPD participates in additional training regarding interaction with disabled individuals, outside of the Cultural Awareness training. Experts in those fields sit on those panels to provide information about behaviors and how to address those.
- Asked Chief Cochran to speak further on the additional training. Chief noted TPD leads the state in the training academy. Recruits receive over 100 hours in behavioral health crisis. With de-escalation, there is a lot of overlapping. There are 40 hours specifically dedicated to the topic, however there are hundreds of hours of overlapping training. Each officer receives a minimum of 40 hours of annual in-service training, but many partake in additional training opportunities. He feels there is a great partnership with Mr. Davis.
- Committee member Hiller –
 - Are all of the protected classes discussed during annual training. Chief Cochran stated they cover as many as they are able, and that the five main protected classes continue to be the only ones recognized by the federal government, however the others are discussed. With regard to transgender individuals, there are many instances where an officer cannot tell outright that an individual is transgendered. Treatment is not different with regard to decorum and carrying out the duty. Deputy Chief Wheelles noted that the diversity of the workforce brings benefits to conversation and maintaining the model-level of policies and training.
 - Could the committee receive information regarding the minority representation of the department? How has that grown in the past 5-10 years? Chief Cochran noted he had a goal to improve in this area, and feels the department has been able to continue meeting this goal. The recruitment team has been reaching out to different racial groups. He noted that the past four academies have been extremely diverse.
 - Where are we as far as percentage of the workforce in diversity? Chief Cochran did not have that information on hand, but could send it. He noted that diversity within the officer-level was high, however, he would like to see a more diverse command staff. Deputy Chief Wheelles noted

Chief Cochran had been working hard to create more diversity within the department, and that it was a priority. He feels it is on a good path, but could always continue to improve.

- Question for Mr. Davis: Could you expand on a few moments during the training where you felt officers were beginning to understand the material? Mr. Davis responded one item was teaching officers to know if an individual is speaking from a clear mind, and understand the situation. Being able to identify that, will allow for clear communication to begin. Prior to presenting that metric, Mr. Davis did not think officers had been taught that information.
- You provided a number of examples of cultural experiences, do you feel that information was new for the officers? Mr. Davis stated he did not think the information was new, however noted the honesty of conversation and openness to want to understand the perception of law enforcement from other cultures.
- In terms of interactions with the TPD classes (in-service vs. recruits), on a scale from 1-10 from when they walk in...how do you feel they understand? Mr. Davis noted there is a post-training evaluation, where participants are able to rate the training. There have only been a few evaluations that showed the training was not as useful as they felt it should be. At the end of the session, there is also a question/answer time where the presenters ask the class if there is anything they would like to see improved. No major comments. At the end of the last training, the class was given an exam. The group was able to answer correctly. Chief Cochran noted the training of 4-5 hours is not going to change the opinions of the feelings of other cultures, however they should take away more understanding and information to reflect on. CPT Haltom noted that from a supervisor standpoint, there is a noticeable shift in how the officers respond throughout the training from the first day to the end. There are “a-ha moments” as they become more engaged. Chief Cochran noted the one of the big realizations he has seen from officers is the understanding that not all Latinos are Mexican, and not all Asians are from China or Japan.
- What’s the best way to follow up to make sure the training has “stuck”? Chief Cochran noted those are difficult metrics to measure, however it was something they were working on. CPT Haltom noted he had a slide on his presentation that would discuss this further. Mr. Davis responded that he felt one of the best ways to measure was to review how the

information is used in the field, and how it's being defined in the training field. If they are talking about tactics, and someone brings in something they learned from de-escalation, then you begin to see that the training has been effective. You can begin to measure the effectiveness by conducting a post-training evaluation, he suggested about three months out, to see what things the officers have been using in the field.

- Committee member Padilla:
 - Slide discussing police officers are regarded as being great communicators...is that what that bullet point was meaning to imply? Mr. Davis stated that was correct. Committee member Padilla noted that he has seen officers of both calibers, some who were great communicators, and others who have said they hate talking to people. How much time is devoted to developing the skill of communicating intentions, and purposes effectively with members of the community, they will not be able to be good officers. Chief Cochran noted he would not be able to put a quantitative number on it, however, communicating was part of the recruit academy. This was a shift from how it had been many years ago in the academy when recruits were expected to sit and not speak. The training staff encourages and engages with communicating with the recruits and promotes them speaking up as well. Deputy Chief Wheelles stated there is more scenario-based training during the academy to teach the recruits about speaking to the public. CPT Haltom noted that the critiques received after the scenario-based training asked recruits about remembering the first words they spoke to the contact. This helps teach them to be mindful of their words from the very beginning of speaking to someone.
 - During the conversation, it was heard that the “Topeka Police Department’s cultural competency champion” is that term meant toward rank and file or command staff? Mr. Davis stated that when leadership embraces the training, it is easier for rank & file to feel comfortable following along, however it is for the department as a whole. Mr. Davis noted that Committee member Padilla had commented about how one officer “taking over” could completely disrupt a situation simply by the words and tone they are using. Committee member Padilla suggested that officers displaying success at skillful communication be given a “nod” from the department.

- Do you feel new recruits who are coming into the academy with an understanding that some of these skills are emphasized, possibly from other career backgrounds, are more open to this training? Mr. Davis noted the new recruits commented he had never heard some of the information regarding children with a foster system background before, and asked if someone from that background could be on the panel. And that request was able to occur.
- Committee member Padilla wanted to let the community know that the officers are receiving a lot of training, with a lot of emphasis placed on being culturally aware. If there are officers not showing that skill, perhaps more training is necessary, however he would like for the public to understand the amount of training that is received.
- Chairwoman Ortiz noted the subject of trauma-based training was something she felt was important and perhaps not understood as well as it should be. Chief Cochran agreed that this would be a topic to review more in-depth. There is training on this during crisis intervention training, but it needs to be reviewed again. Mr. Davis noted that communication can always be better, and that in addition to general communication things like tone, body language, active listening, crisis communication, and other items in that regard that police officers would encounter, were also discussed. Mr. Davis appreciated the amount of training in Cultural Competency that TPD partakes in.
- [Video 1:32:15 minutes] CPT Haltom pulled the slide titled “Effectiveness of Training” which discuss three items to measure post-training quality. Those items are testing, demonstration, and compliance. {This presentation is available on the committee’s webpage}. Committee member Hiller inquired about accountability to know that officers have actually completed the online training. Deputy Chief Wheelles noted that in addition to being able to access any of the training that is on the PowerDMS system, officers can pull any of the training or pieces of the training up through a word search option.
- Chairwoman Ortiz requested CPT Haltom proceed with his presentation, noting that there were only 15 minutes remaining for the meeting. CPT Haltom discussed the slide titled “Relevant Topics” relating to training and continued evaluation of practices. Chief Cochran noted that the term “police reform” is sometimes divisive, however he felt that it was important for the department to continually evaluate best practices and training, and to be able to perform their duties while also understanding social constructs.
- Chairwoman Ortiz inquired about progressive discipline. Deputy Chief Wheelles noted that the process of addressing a policy violation typically begins with a

write-up. As items are sent out on PowerDMS, the lower-level supervisors are good about reminding the officers under their command to review and sign those. Deputy Chief Wheelles feels PowerDMS is a very useful tool in helping to show the accountability of officers.

- Chairwoman Ortiz inquired if there are any programs that are recorded to inform the department about known individuals with physical, mental, or behavioral health issues. Chief Cochran confirmed. Information on the Take Me Home (<https://www.topeka.org/tpd/take-me-home-program>) and the Behavioral Health Premise Alert program (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/cot-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/police/BehavioralHealthPremiseAlertEnrollment.pdf>) are on the TPD webpage.

Committee member Hiller inquired about additional de-escalation training when dealing with individuals who have proven in the past to be difficult to deal with. Chief Cochran noted the idea for the Premise Alert is to provide additional information to officers arriving on scene, with the goal to be as best prepared to provide the safest outcome for the officers and individual. CPT Haltom noted that the assessment of resources based on information that is known is something he has discussed in previous meetings, and noted that these examples fall directly into that category. Committee member Hiller felt having information on the training, supervision, discipline, etc to pull it together was important from a Council member standpoint.

4) Discussion:

{All policies discussed in this meeting are public record and can be found on the Topeka Police Department's webpage, and the Special Committee's webpage: <https://www.topeka.org/citycouncil/police-community>}.

a. Annual Use of Force Reports (2016-2019)

This item will carry over to the next meeting.

b. Fleeing Vehicles

This item will carry over to the next meeting.

c. Fleeing Persons

This item will carry over to the next meeting.

5) Set meeting schedule, next meeting date

Citizens wanting to speak on the items may contact the committee. Questions or comments should be sent to the Liz Toyne, City Council Assistant, at etoyme@topeka.org .

Next meeting will be at 3:00pm, in Classroom A at the Law Enforcement Center.

6) Adjourn

Chairwoman Ortiz adjourned the meeting at pm.

Meeting video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/Y6TWXSnGx6g>